

To: Alan Wilson, SC Attorney General
From: Sheila Gillespie, Detention Center Administrator
Date: 11/4/2015
Re: Inappropriate Use of Inmate Labor

I am writing this letter in hopes of getting clarification on a current issue that I am experiencing. I am the Jail Administrator at Chesterfield County Detention Center in Chesterfield County, SC. Just to give you a little background on the issue that I am concerned about and need some direction on, I offer the following narrative. When I returned to work from vacation on October 26, 2015 I received information that the Sheriff's Office transported ten (10) inmates from the detention center to the residence of Brent Nicholson, supposedly to help load weapons and ammunition that the Sheriff's Office was in the process of retrieving from that residence. Brent Nicholson had just been arrested by the Sheriff's Office and was in possession of 10,000 guns, located on his property. My concerns are that inmates are not allowed to perform any work on private property and that it is illegal for inmates to handle weapons and ammunition. It's also an issue that five (5) of those inmates taken on that detail are convicted felons. Once I verified with staff that was actually on duty that these inmates were taken away from the detention center, I immediately emailed the County Administrator, Denise Douglass, to inform her that I would be contacting Blake Taylor with the SC Department of Corrections, Inspections and Compliance Department because I felt that this issue needed to be addressed immediately I was contacted by the County Attorney Heath Ruffner and He " stated everything is fine." I spoke directly with Mr. Taylor on the phone and I emailed him as well. Mr. Taylor stated to me "That the best thing to do would have been to not let the inmates go on the detail, but since we can't undo what is already done just don't let them go anymore and everything should be fine." I also forwarded a copy of the same email that I sent to Mr. Taylor to Robert Ellison, SCDC Inspections and Compliance. Because I was not satisfied with the answer that I was given by Mr. Taylor I attempted to contact attorney Heather Weiss with your office, I left a detailed voicemail but never heard anything back from her either. Because I had not been given an answer that was sufficient I contacted the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (Pee Dee Region) and I received a call from Agent Roxanne Bethea who stated that she was aware of the case because "they were Heading the case but she could not offer any advice on what to do concerning the inmates being on private property and assisting with loading evidence for the Sheriff's Office ". Agent Bethea stated that she did not have an answer but she would get an answer and get back with me, she never did. However, I did receive a call from the Chesterfield County Attorney stating again that we were fine and that this was not an issue.

A little over a year ago, the former Sheriff of Chesterfield County was found guilty of similar activities, involving inmates, handguns and inappropriate inmate labor. I actually was a witness at that trial and I heard the questioned asked time and time again, "Why didn't you say something? Why didn't you report what was going on?" I elected to report these criminal acts and I am the one that's targeted and frowned upon. The